

## [Mr. William McNeill]

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Range-lore

Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas. Interview

Page one Tales - Personal Anecdote

RANGE-LORE

"I was born in Alabama 82 years ago," says Mr. William McNeill of San Angelo, Texas.

"I came to Texas in 1875, and settled at Bremond, Robertson County. It was my first time to ride a train and I was always teased about not knowing that it stopped at the station to let the passengers get on. When I saw it pulling into the station, I ran out and yelled, 'Stop, wait for me, I want to get on.'

"The first work I ever did in Texas was on the Judge Honeycutt ranch, out on Blue Ridge. I worked with old Captain Blaylock, he sure was a dandy, they don't make 'em no better.

"In 1885 I came to the San Angelo section and had several chances to go up the trail; but I wouldn't never go, I didn't want to go. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 I'll tell you another thing, I wasn't no bronc buster, for I always choked the saddle horn when I rode, regardless of the horse's nature. This ridin' broncs and going up the trail will make a fellow got old. I ain't never goin' to get old in looks. Yes, I'm 82 years old but most people guess me to be around 60. I have lived a quiet bachelor life which is one of the best ways of staying young.

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"I received quite a little recognition at one time for advising and helping a guard to capture an escaped convict near Austin. Me and another feller was a-ridin' around in the outskirts of Austin one day when we heard a gun fire, as we were passing a bunch of convicts working under guards. A nigger convict was escaping into the river bottoms. I stopped and told the guard to jump into the buggy and I'd take him around to head the nigger off, then I said, 'You go down in the timber near the river and get behind a tree or ledge, when the nigger comes by just halt him right there.' Well we drove around the bend, and the guard took his place behind a big tree; soon the negro come by and was taken in by the guard. They sure gave me a nice 'write up' in the newspapers about this little capture; it sure made my chest stick out for a while.

"I knew a little about some of the outlaws. I rode from El Paso to Abilene with a feller that had 3 bullet holes all in the back of his saddle; he had escaped some outlaw, he never would tell much about it. Speaking of the rough element, of the olden days in West Texas, well that rough element is still in East Texas and don't never leave out.

"You know the Englishmen never could get by with much in the ranching business. Old Bill Anson came out to Christoval with every pocket swelled and stuffed with gold, went into the cattle business and it didn't take him long to go down flat. I don't know who was razzed the most the Englishmen or the tenderfoot. Every cowboy had that little mischief to go through with though. It always got my goat for them to call me "green from the states" but I had to take it to gain their friendship.

"Did you ever hear of a bar tender goin' to church? Well that's me. I was a bar tender in Sweetwater when Sheriff Jim Newman, a mighty wealthy man, was shot in the back by a party that had some old feud or scrape some years before. I was the first to get to him; he had five buck shots put into his back. Sheriff Newman had just walked out of the saloon and started to the courthouse when he heard a click of a gun, then he turned to try and locate it and the next thing he knew he had caught the shots in his back. Then he got his deputies (English brothers) to follow the suspected man to Roby, Texas. They caught the

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suspect, placed him in jail but 4 never could prove anything. The sheriff, also the English brothers had plenty of capitol, but could not do much in this case regardless of the money, like they can now. When the sheriff was shot, a stray bullet pierced a young boy in the neck. He was knocked down and of all the yelling and screaming I ever heard, this was the best, it was right funny to us; he was as wild as a dog with a bunch of tin cans tied to it's tail.

"I was raised back in the old states by an old negro mammy and she was a dear old soul to me. I have seen the different members of the family put up on blocks and sold to men from far and near. Of course, those old mammies hated to part with their children. I have seen the men whip the slaves- men and women- whip their own sex. They would tie their hands together, bend them over, slip their hands over their knees and run a stick under their knees and over their arms, then whip them 'til they could not stand up when freed from that position. There is never a day passes, that I don't think things over and wonder if my own dear, dead mother went to Heaven or not, after seeing her tie and whip those poor old niggers. I never could see anything that I thought they deserved punishment of that kind for. I loved my old mammy, she was so good to me.

"The escaped slaves were always trailed down by hounds; they never got away, there were always some good slaves to tell on others. I was glad when the 5 slaves gained their freedom, even though we had a large number and lost plenty of money. They made many people rich and got nothing but punishment as a reward. They tell that some of the masters were good but I never did see a good one." Range-lore

Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mr. William McNeill, San Angelo, Texas, interviewed, February 2, 1938.